DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 793 JC 980 194

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TITLE	How the Other 2/3 Live: Institutional Initiatives for Part-Time Faculty Assimilation in America's 2-Year Colleges.
INSTITUTION	Hagerstown Junior Coll., MD.
PUB DATE	1998-04-24
NOTE	12p.; Paper presented at Forum 8 of the Annual Convention of the American Association of Community Colleges (78th, Miami, FL, April 24, 1998).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adjunct Faculty; Adjustment (To Environment); *College Faculty; College Planning; Community Colleges; Educational Practices; Employment Practices; Faculty College Relationship; *Faculty Development; *Institutional Mission; Interprofessional Relationship; *Part Time Faculty; Personnel Policy; Program Development; School Policy; Standards; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Role; *Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	American Association of University Professors

ABSTRACT

The number of part-time faculty employed in two-year colleges has risen dramatically in recent years, with current data indicating that 64% of two-year college faculty work part time. It is critical, therefore, that colleges ensure that part-time faculty are well integrated into the organizational culture. In assessing initiatives for helping part-timers assimilate, colleges can look to standards established by their regional accrediting agency or guidelines developed by advocacy groups, such as the American Association of University Professors. In addition, a number of processes have been developed and implemented, making part-time faculty integral components of the college. These processes include such steps as providing handbooks for part-timers, conducting formal evaluations at least once a year, developing mechanisms for recognizing and publishing adjuncts' efforts, providing professional development funds, including adjuncts on college committees, and involving them in curriculum and textbook decisions. Moreover, part-time faculty should be recognized as integral to the future of two-year colleges, in that their broad-based experience adds to the colleges' comprehensiveness and flexibility. Finally, improving the quality of institutional life for part-time faculty is not a finite goal, but a part of the endless process of developing teaching excellence among both part- and full-time faculty. A paradigm for assimilating part-time faculty is appended. Contains 13 references. (BCY)

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ED 417 793

HOW THE OTHER 2/3 LIVE: INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES FOR PART-TIME FACULTY ASSIMILATION IN AMERICA'S 2-YEAR COLLEGES

Forum #8

78th Annual Convention
AACC

Miami, Florida

April 24, 1998

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Introduction

Is it possible? There are less than seven hundred days until the millennium! What trends have emerged from the 1990s that present challenges for the 21st century? A major one is the increase in part-time faculty in America's 2-year colleges. Over-all growth of part-timers in the first half of the decade exceeded 18 percent. The ratio of full-time to part-time is reported as 36 percent to 64 percent.[1] Wolfe and Foskett capture the paradox of the challenge. In the same paragraph they describe part-time faculty as "valuable assets" and "overlooked, overworked, and even exploited."[2] The issue is emerging as one of recognition that the continuing journey toward institutional excellence will require the assimilation of part-time faculty into the college's organizational culture. Greive suggests that the transition is from one of "concern about alienated part-timers" to "mutual acceptance and involvement"[3] on a broad institutional base. What criteria exist that an institution may use to assess its initiatives for improving how the other 2/3 live?

Organizational Standards

Accreditation is an important status for all 2-year colleges. An interesting benchmark is the accreditation standards presented by the six regional associations that comprise our nation's organizational

framework. None of them is particularly helpful. The North Central Association admits that "there is no precise mathematical formula to determine the appropriate . . ." ratio of full-time to part-time faculty. All six associations refer to the value of part-time teachers and the importance of a core of full-time teachers. The Southern Association provides the most precise statement:

> The employment of part-time faculty members can provide expertise to enhance the educational effectiveness of an institution but the number of part-time faculty members must be limited. Part-time faculty members teaching courses for credit must meet the same requirements for professional, experiential, and scholarly preparation as their full-time counterparts teaching the same discipline.[4]

Another useful source of organizational parameters is the Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors. The group presents a set of "guidelines for good practices" and suggests that they be adopted by colleges and identified as standards of excellence by accrediting agencies:

- Selection and hiring based upon clear criteria and standards
- Active recruitment and selection of the best available candidates
- Assurance that part-time faculty will be considered fairly for tenure-track opportunities
- Long-term planning whenever possible to provide extended terms of appointment consistent with institutional needs

- Careful consideration of institutional mission, needs, and practices
- Provision for orientation, mentoring, and professional support
- Integration into collegial processes (including governance)[5]

These seven guidelines are more precise, yet they still leave college personnel without a complete blueprint for assimilating part-time faculty. Does such a procedure exist?

The Assimilation Paradigm

In 1985 Parsons presented a five-element design for making part-time faculty an integral component of the college's organizational culture.[6] Appendix A lists the steps in the process. Are they still viable? In 1997 the Virginia Community College System adopted an eleven-step process that "provides constructive feedback to adjunct faculty including recognition of outstanding service:"

1. ...provide an adjunct faculty handbook [with] information about...evaluation and recognition plans/policies.
2. Clearly designate the lines of authority and supervision...including...the supervisor and the evaluator.
3. Conduct a formal evaluation of each adjunct faculty member at least yearly...include students and supervisor,...communicate the results to the adjuncts....
4. Establish and publish a mechanism to recognize efforts of adjuncts....

5. Regularly assess the needs of adjuncts...use the findings to improve support....

6. Recognize and/or reward adjuncts...for excellence in teaching.

7. Include...adjuncts in the allocation of professional development funds.

8. Invite adjuncts...to participate in college cultural and social events and...graduation.

9. Include adjuncts...on college committees...and task forces.

10. Invite adjuncts...to attend faculty and division meetings.

11. Involve adjuncts...in decisions affecting curriculum changes and textbook options.[7]

The similarities are striking. These elements help clarify the actions needed for assimilation. Are there other aspects that are essential to the process?

Mission Internalization

In 1994 Vaughan examined the mission of the community college and the role of part-time faculty in its implementation. His position is clear: "Without part-time faculty, the community college could not fulfill its mission." He lists the characteristics of the mission as "commitments to teaching, to being open and accessible, to offering a comprehensive array of courses and to serving its community." He suggests that the broad expertise base provided by part-timers makes comprehensiveness possible, their presence in the community helps the college build ties to its host, and their diversity closely mirrors the college's student

body. He concludes by suggesting that part-time faculty be recognized as "indispensable to the community colleges' future...."[8] Has progress been made toward realizing Vaughan's suggestion?

Smith provides a design that allows for the development of "a complete strategic plan to address integration concerns." Elements include a process that:

1. Centers around the mission of the college.
2. Includes a clear statement of purpose (e.g., the distinctive task of providing quality instruction to every student in every class by offering a challenging academic environment in a relevant framework).
3. Identifies a system of core values which is embraced by all...adjuncts (e.g., quality learning, care of students, commitment to the college).

He provides a plan for specific goal development that assists adjuncts with the internalization of the institution's mission.[9] The process reinforces the indispensability called for by Vaughan. There is another dimension that is essential to completing the assimilation process.

Empirical Indicators of Success

An emerging characteristic of the organizational culture of community colleges at the end of the 20th century has been described as "the transition to a learning community." Parsons describes a process for including part-time faculty in developing the new

paradigm. He suggests that part-time faculty are essential to the creation of a "common cause" within the learning community. "The cause is academic achievement." Together, full- and part-time faculty can make what is an ideal become a reality.[10]

Another aspect of the learning community is dedication to instructional excellence. Kamps presents a design for assessing the quality of instruction delivered by part-time faculty. His findings are revealing. "There were no significant differences in student achievement dependent upon whether the student had an adjunct or full-time instructor."[11] His design needs to be replicated on numerous campuses and linked to a model of professional development for adjuncts. The result will be progress toward excellence.

Finally, Scott describes a series of support strategies to ensure that part-time faculty are able to transmit their experience and subject matter expertise to students. Such diverse elements as training in the application of educational technology, mentoring opportunities, participation in a planning colloquium, and access to intensive "teaching skills" workshops are low-cost approaches to assimilation and quality improvement.[12] These empirical indicators point the way toward improving the quality of organizational life for part-time faculty.

Conclusion: A Journey, Not A Destination

Will part-time faculty achieve parity with their full-time colleagues before the millennium? The question permeates the literature describing part-time faculty in America's 2-year colleges. It is incorrect. The commitment to developing teaching excellence among all teachers, full- and part-time, can never end. Following a national study of "best practices" for working with part-time faculty, Roueche, Roueche, and Milliron suggest that developing a comprehensive part-time faculty support system will require the involvement of "a broad cross section of the college community" and constant reinforcement of its importance to the participants and value to the college. They describe the initiative as "an organizational and instructional imperative for the 21st century."[13] As community colleges are committed to facilitating achievement for all of their students, the institutional initiatives detailed above suggest that a similar commitment to part-time faculty is under way. The first step of an endless journey has been taken!

APPENDIX A

I. Recruitment Strategies

- A. Statement of institutional goals, objectives
  1. Program-specific
  2. Outcome-oriented
- B. Sources
  1. Faculty, full- and part-time
  2. Program advisory committees
  3. Business/industry/agency liaison
  4. Media advertising
- C. Personnel exchange
  1. Business/industry
  2. Agencies

II. Employment Procedures

- A. Intake interview
  1. Locus
  2. Personnel involved
  3. Content/orientation
- B. Group orientation
  1. Participants
  2. Content
  3. Peer interaction
- C. Part-time faculty handbook
  1. Content
  2. Distribution
  3. Feedback

III. Legal Status

- A. Statement of institutional policies, regulations
- B. Compensation procedures
  1. Salary
  2. Fringe benefits
  3. "Cards of identity"
- C. Property rights and tenure decisions
- D. Part-time faculty contract

IV. Evaluation and Development

- A. Evaluation design
  1. Participants
  2. Procedures
  3. Timing
- B. Integration between evaluation and development
- C. Development program
  1. Components
  2. Assessment
  3. Feedback

V. Public Relations and Marketing Strategies

- A. Part-time faculty commitment
- B. Business/industry/agency partnerships
- C. The liaison function

Part-Time Faculty Assimilation Paradigm

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